

Title: THE SLAVE, THE JAILER, THE MAGISTRATES, ACTS 16:16-40
(Chatham, NJ; 05/08/16, AM) [Pc – Narrative Analysis]

Theme: Paul and his preaching encounter a slave girl, a jailer, and town magistrates.

Purpose: To examine how the Gospel can affect different people in different ways.

Introduction:

1. Paul continues his work at the “place of prayer” and his network grows.
2. Luke reports the more unusual events in the ministry among the Philippians.
3. Injustice and persecution at the hands of the authorities will come to characterize the work of this church for when Paul writes to them, he is once again in prison.

I. The Slave Girl: Negative Opportunity

A. Paul Renounces Free Publicity, 16-18

1. She followed them, 17, and spoke out loud
2. She went on like this “for many days,” 18
3. I imagine a discussion with Silas about what to do
 - Was she a good source of publicity?
 - Did her reputation associate Paul with demons?
 - Did her interruptions prevent Paul from speaking?
4. Finally his annoyance got the better of him, 18, and he cast out the demon
5. The good side to this: Paul set her free from the control of demonic forces
6. The bad side: she no longer had any economic value to her owners
7. The Gospel will cause some economic disturbance in Ephesus as well
8. Today the world is still using economics to threaten Christians: note the bathroom bills (they are not discriminatory) and some large corporations and stars threaten to pull out of those states
9. Many still operate in countries where homosexuality is punishable by death, but they don’t threaten to pull out of those places!!

B. The legal case against Paul

1. What was his crime? He cast out an evil spirit?
2. Appears to be some anti-Semitism: “these men are Jews” (20)
3. They are advocating different customs: still no crime!
4. “They are disturbing our city.”
5. Communist dictatorships use vague charges like: “disturbing the well-being of society”
6. No mention is made about the accusers loss of revenue, which is the real issue
7. They are beaten and thrown in jail

II. The Jailer: A Unique and Unplanned Opportunity, 25-34

A. In the inner prison, in bondage, 24

1. As if these men were the most dangerous of the dangerous
2. Paul and Silas pray and sing
3. Later when he writes to the Philippians that they should rejoice always, they could remember their behavior in prison
4. The earthquake, 26, was not a mere coincidence

B. The jailer’s heart was torn open

1. God’s hand was in this just as it was with Lydia
2. 30, his question sounds like he just wanted his life spared
3. However, he knew why they were there, and it’s likely he knew something about them before they arrived

4. His entire household followed his lead, 34-34
5. Perhaps he was the good that came from the injustice directed at Paul

C. What was his network like?

1. Not in the higher echelon of society's power brokers and important people
2. Other guards?
3. Prisoners?
4. Might he now begin to treat them differently? Or preach the Gospel to them?

III. The Magistrates: An Confrontational Opportunity

A. Paul demands his rights, 35-37

1. They tried to ignore their own injustice: even against non-citizens they had no real charges
2. Paul did not tolerate their behavior: we have rights as citizens
3. He demanded that they adhere to the rule of law, not the rule of the mob, or the totalitarian impulses of the government
4. Perhaps this was in the back of his mind: their authority ultimately came from God, Romans 13:1
5. Even Pilate drew his authority from a higher source, John 19:11
6. They will answer to God for poor decisions or unjust policies

B. Paul's influence in the halls of power

1. In Ephesus he had friends in the halls of power, Acts 19:31
2. Put on notice: the authority of God trumps the authority of man
3. "The Supreme Court is not the Supreme Being"
4. The Gospel confronts them

Conclusions:

1. Paul returns to Lydia's house and encouraged the church, 40
2. In this city the spread of the Gospel was punctuated with a few dramatic events.
3. Along with the quiet spread of the Gospel, the work occurred.
4. Later he wrote to them about standing firm, serving one another, and focusing their minds on the good and true and noble.
5. Let us model the Philippians: rejoice, serve one another, and obey Phil. 4:8.
6. Such things fulfill our role as God's people and advance the cause of the Gospel.